1. John McMurty’s essay begins with a personal anecdote about the results of playing sports (especially football) since childhood. When he can no longer ignore his physical condition, he seeks treatment and is hospitalized. How does the anecdote lend credibility to his argument?
2. Paragraphs 5-7 compare and contrast football and war. Is this comparison convincing? How does the comparison appeal to logos?
3. In paragraph 9, the tone shifts. How is the shift achieved? Explain how the shift mirrors a transition in McMurtry’s argument.
4. In paragraph 14, McMurtry cites a Harvard study showing that some of the more brutal characteristics of football players are valued in the business world. How do the study’s findings support McMurtry’s argument against the brutality of football?
5. McMurtry also addresses the argument that games such as football allow us to discharge our “original sin urge into less harmful channels than, say, war” (para 15). Cite passages where McMurtry counters this argument. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
6. Consider the language of football, especially the words shared by the military. What sports other than football have a militaristic side? Review this in context if needed.
7. Who is McMurtry’s audience? Is it necessary for the reader to understand or care about football in order to understand what McMurtry is saying about society? Explain. Consider using appeals in your answer.
8. McMurty characterizes General George Patton and President Richard Nixon as “jock-loving….media stars” (para 6). Think of contemporary media stars who associate themselves with football or other sports. Does the association enhance or tarnish their image?